independent units. Rather than a great extended family living under one authority and one roof, what one typically finds in a large compound is a number of related but independent households. They will usually share the use of the kōng-thîⁿ:, the yard between the two wings of the house, the well if there is one, and the toilet, but each family will have its own bedroom and its own stove, even if this requires the building of two stoves in one kitchen.

The stages in the evolution of a house from a small one-family structure to a large complex compound are clearly marked in the use and care of the kōng-thîⁿ:. When a house is new and inhabited by a single kê, the kōng-thîⁿ: will be always the best kept room in the building. The interior walls will be freshly white-washed; the floors will have been swept daily; and the furniture will be as expensive as the family can possibly afford. After the sons of the original family divide their parental kê, the kōng-thîⁿ: and its furniture will begin to deteriorate, for their wives will be unwilling to devote their time or money to what they regard as "public property." So long as their mother is still alive, however, the room will never be in marked disrepair. What work she cannot do herself, she will badger her daughters-in-law into doing. The real decline of the kōng-thîⁿ: begins when she and her husband die. There is then no one among the residents of the house who has a responsibility towards the settlement as a whole, and as a result no one is willing to give up the time or money to the upkeep of the kōng-thîⁿ:. As one of the most accurate of Chinese proverbs states, "What is public is for everyone's use and is no one's responsibility." The inevitable result is that the kōng-thîⁿ: and its

3: Wolf F-5 (1959-1961) 1968 AD5 Taiwan Hokkien AD5
Peihotien

but it was undeniably different. At that time the family was not particularly large: Lim Chieng-cua was not yet married and his elder brother wasn't living at home. Speculative neighbors might have expected the Lims to build the usual bottom wing of the U, adding a new wing, if their prosperity continued, when Lim Chieng-cua married. Instead, the Lims built a truly large house, a house that is still the largest in Peihotien. Due to the unusual individuality that has given the Lims a reputation for wisdom and leadership—a habit of seeing as important the same things as their neighbors but not feeling required to follow the conventional paths to their goals—Lim Chieng-cua and his father departed slightly from the usual practice. Rather than building a U-shaped house, they built their house in the form of a hollow square, leaving a small open courtyard in the center. The front of the square, however, deviated in no way from the conventional base for a U-shaped structure, even to the doorways for expansion at each end. They surrounded the house and the drying ground in front with a dignified brick wall, a useful addition in the city, but one rarely found in the northern villages now that bandit attacks are no longer feared. They also built a long, handsome brick pig pen, a final touch which both amused and awed their neighbors.

The Lims' guest hall is quite a large room, as it would have to be to retain proper proportions with the rest of the house. It is floored with lovely terrazzo, neatly and soberly. The floor is swept more often than in the other rooms and mopped every week or so. Puddles left by diaperless children are cleaned up fairly quickly, and concerted effort keeps the chickens and ducks from seeking shelter there. When we first moved into the house, there was no ceiling in the guest hall. The whitewashed walls stretched up to heavy beams richly darkened by years of incense smoke. Unfortunately, in his restless desire to improve and change, Lim Chieng-cua added a ceiling to the room. His neighbors consider it attractive, but I missed the stark dignity of those beams.

The Lims' guest hall is simply furnished, far more simply than their income requires. The prosperous families of Peihotien buy heavy, overstuffed chairs covered in plastic. In summer they are a torment to sit on for more than a few minutes, and in winter they smell musty and develop miniature landscapes of mold. The Lims, whether from modesty or from a more developed sense of comfort, retain the old rattan chairs that are comfortable year around. The family altar is another matter. Modesty here would not be a virtue: a

342 in winter.

• 351 [243 247] Most of the dwellings of farmers have a pounded earth courtyard for drying rice and as a place to work. Recently, the farmers' association has provided half the cement necessary to cover the courtyard and many villagers have taken advantage of the offer, the first in 1961. Borrowing the use of a cemented courtyard is now quite 343 common. Farm outbuildings such as pig pens are extremely crude with only partial walls and a thatch roof.

342 A dwelling typically has a regular sequence of development. The first step is a rectangle 15 feet deep and 20 or more feet wide. The main room will be the kung t'ing which is a combination of sitting, dining, ancestral worship, and general main room in the house. The usual room dimensions are a 15 foot depth and a width of 10 or 15 feet. Extended out on either side are other rooms, each 10 or 15 feet wide. Such rooms will be added as needed until the building is three or five rooms long with the kung t'ing in the center accessed through a central door. One of the rooms is a kitchen but if there are only two rooms, the kitchen may be a temporary attached leanto.

387 It is best to have a geomancer orient the house for good luck (see Chapter VII). Many people skip this step by copying the orientation of nearby houses although this is contrary to the theory of geomancy (ti-li or feng-shui).